

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 28493

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, US, IS, EG, FR, XF
SUBJECT: FRENCH PERCEPTIONS ON MIDDLE EAST
BEFORE CAMP DAVID

1. IN ADVANCE OF THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT, FRANCE HAS REAFFIRMED ITS POSITION ON THE MIDDLE EAST. A COMMUNIQUE OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AUGUST 24 NOTED THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD HAD SUMMARIZED THE FRENCH POSITION AS FOLLOWS: "FRANCE CONSIDERS THAT ONLY A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT BASED ON RESOLUTION 242 IS CAPABLE OF BRINGING TO THE MIDDLE EAST THE LASTING PEACE WHICH ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE AREA NEED. SUCH A SETTLEMENT WILL BE ATTAINED ONLY IF ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED ARE ASSOCIATED WITH IT AND IF IT RESTS IN PARTICULAR ON THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, ON THE RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIANS TO A HOMELAND, ON CONSIDERATION FOR THE LEGITIMATE SECURITY CONCERNS OF ALL THE STATES IN THE AREA, INCLUDING ISRAEL, ON THE RECIPROCAL RECOGNITION OF FRONTIERS, AND ON THE PRO-
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GRESSIVE ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACEFUL RELATIONS AMONG THE CONCERNED COUNTRIES."

2. MFA SECRETARY GENERAL SOUTOU, DURING A CALL BY THE AMBASSADOR AUGUST 25, SAID THE STATEMENT REPRESENTED NOTHING NEW IN THE FRENCH POSITION. HE IMPLIED THAT IT HAD BEEN ISSUED IN PART BECAUSE THE ISRAELI

AMBASSADOR IN PARIS WAS EXPRESSING CONCERN THAT THE FRENCH WERE DILUTING THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE SECURITY PLANK OF THEIR PLATFORM. SOUTOU SAID THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD'S RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER OF AUGUST 15 WOULD REASSERT THE PRINCIPLES JUST RESTATED PUBLICLY BY GISCARD, WOULD STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF ARAB SOVEREIGNTY OUTSIDE THE 1967 BORDERS, AND WOULD ENCOURAGE THE US PRESIDENT'S EFFORTS.

3. SOUTOU CONTINUED THAT ONE SHOULD NOT BE TOO PESSIMISTIC ABOUT CAMP DAVID. HE BELIEVES THAT TOTAL FAILURE IS INCONCEIVABLE, SINCE EVEN BEGIN REALIZES AT THE US IS NOW SO DEEPLY ENGAGED THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE COULD BE SEVERE. AT WORST, SOUTOU BELIEVES THAT THE CAMP DAVID MEETING WILL BUY TIME. BUT, IN HIS VIEW, IF THE RESULTS ARE MEAGRE, Y COULD LEAD TO A DEFEAT FOR SADAT, MAKING ASSAD THE KINGPIN IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BOOSTING THE INFLUENCE OF THE PLO, OTHER RADICALS, AND THE SOVIETS.

4. SOUTOU SAID THAT THE FRENCH ARE TELLING SADAT TO BE MODERATE. HE ADDED VEHEMENTLY, HOWEVER, THAT FOR SADAT TO MAKE A SEPARATE AGREEMENT WOULD PRODUCE THE MOST NEGATIVE RESULTS IMAGINABLE. IN HIS VIEW, A SEPARATE AGREEMENT BY EGYPT WOULD BE POSITIVE ONLY IF, TO GET IT, ISRAEL RECOGNIZED PALESTINIAN
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SOVEREIGNTY IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA.
HARTMAN

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